

TESTIMONY

Submitted by Emily Close- Emergency Medical Technician for Darien EMS

In support of Raised Bill No. 6148

AN ACT REQUIRING THE OPERATOR OF A VEHICLE OTHER THAN AN EMERGENCY VEHICLE TO REMAIN AT LEAST FIVE HUNDRED FEET BEHIND AN AMBULANCE THAT IS USING FLASHING LIGHTS OR A SIREN.

Dear Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, Senator Boucher and Representative Scribner, thank you for allowing me to testify in support of HB 6148, AN ACT REQUIRING THE OPERATOR OF A VEHICLE OTHER THAN AN EMERGENCY VEHICLE TO REMAIN AT LEAST FIVE HUNDRED FEET BEHIND AN AMBULANCE THAT IS USING FLASHING LIGHTS OR A SIREN.

My name is Emily Close I am a state certified Emergency Medical Technician with Darien EMS/ Post53, as well as a high school student at Darien High School.

Throughout my 3 years in the organization I have been witness to many instances in which drivers have jeopardized the safety of my crewmembers as well as the patient or multiple patients we are providing emergency care to.

The idea for this proposal first occurred to me when I was called to a Motor Vehicle Accident on I-95 for a little boy who had sustained life-threatening injuries. While responding onto the highway, I noticed that my attention was focused not on accessing the scene and the mechanism of injury, but on the cars that were closely tailing the back of the ambulance.

Once on scene I felt relieved that we had arrived safely. The boy's injuries were significant enough to make the decision that a lights and sirens transport to the hospital was necessary. During transport there were cars driving behind the ambulance only 5 to 6 feet away, hoping to use the speed of the ambulance to their advantage.

At that moment I personally felt that the proximity of these cars was affecting my ability to fully shift my focus to the treatment of the boy's wounds.

Speaking not only for Darien EMS services, but for EMS personnel across Connecticut, when I am responding to a call or transporting a patient to the hospital I should not have to worry about the endangerment of the patient's life or my crew members. I should not have to constantly glance out the back doors to see how close the cars are to the ambulance or breathe a sigh of relief when we have arrived at our destination.

Many people forget that an ambulance is a weapon within itself. There are about 5000 liters of compressed oxygen onboard the ambulance. It would take only one second for an ambulance driver to have to stop suddenly causing a car to come plowing into the back of the ambulance.

If this collision were to occur and the oxygen tanks were to explode, we are not only talking about the safety of the patient and ambulance staff being compromised, but every driver and pedestrian within a 1000 foot radius of the explosion.

I will conclude by saying, a driver not operating an emergency vehicle is required to stay 250 feet behind an ambulance using it's lights and sirens. This bill will enable EMS services and providers to carry out treatment of a patient in a way that yields nothing but the highest quality of care. This proposal will also aid in benefiting the citizens of a town when they are in need of emergency care, so please help us, help you.

Thank you again for letting me testify in support of this bill.

Emily Close